

WE CLAIM:

1. A method for obscuring, relative to non-volatile media, by-product, spool-associated data files which are created in the context of cooperative interaction between a computing device and an imaging device, such as a printer, in relation to the handling of a document job file, where such interaction and handling include job-file data transit activities conducted in a transit zone which is operatively interposed these devices, said method comprising

locating and identifying within such zone, each such by-product file at least at a point in time which lies in a time span that is beyond the end of that file's utility, and before any destructive alteration takes place with respect to the file, and

within such time span, and following said locating and identifying, applying a random bit mask obscuring process to the file.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said applying involves the recurrent application of plural, successive, different, random bit masks to the file.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the created by-product, spool-associated files include files in the categories of ghost and shadow files.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of applying a random bit mask process is performed by a print processor.

5. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of applying a random bit mask process is performed by a raster image processor.

6. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of applying a random bit mask
5 process is performed by one of (a) a print processor, (b) a spooler, (c) a printer driver, (d) a raster image processor, (e) a port/language monitor, and (f) a device controller.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one by-product, spool-associated file resides on the computing-device side of the transit zone.

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8. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one by-product, spool-associated file resides on the imaging-device side of the transit zone.

9. The method of claim 4, wherein at least one by-product, spool-associated
15 file resides on the computing-device side of the transit zone.

10. The method of claim 4, wherein at least one by-product, spool-associated file resides on the imaging-device side of the transit zone.

20 11. The method of claim 9, wherein the at least one by-product, spool-associated file is an encrypted file.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the at least one by-product, spool-associated file is an encrypted file.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein said locating, identifying and applying
5 steps are associated with controlling activities that are engaged in by one of a print processor and a raster image processor, which processor also performs an additional function of by-product file-locking in a manner assuring a controlling role for the processor in relation to by-product file obscuring.

10 14. The method of claim 13, wherein at least one by-product, spool-associated file resides on the computing-device side of the transit zone.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein at least one by-product, spool-associated file resides on the imaging-device side of the transit zone.